

# **RULES AND GUIDELINES**

## **for those wishing to attain the rank of non-commissioned officer**

compiled by Sgt. Ronnie Hatfield 12th TX

*“The choice of non-commissioned officers is an object of the greatest importance: The order and discipline of a regiment depend so much upon their behavior, that too much care cannot be taken in preferring none to that trust but those who by their merit and good conduct are entitled to it. Honesty, sobriety, and a remarkable attention to every point of duty, with a neatness in their dress, are indispensable requisites.....”*

*.....Baron Von Stuben*

The success on and off the field of the Infantry, rests ultimately on the performance of the men in the ranks. Their performance is a direct reflection of the training and devotion to duty instilled in them by the Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO). The peak performance of the Infantryman is assured by being led by an NCO who is well trained, motivated, and devoted to his duties. The two main keys for accomplishing this are communication and education. Communication stays open only as long as the NCO has the respect of the officers over him and the men in his charge. Education should be the priority of every NCO. It is the duty of every NCO to learn the job at the next highest rank in case he must eventually fill that role. A good NCO realizes that there is always more to learn.

With that in mind, if you should decide you wish to take on the responsibility of serving as an NCO, please use the following general and direct rules and guidelines as a measure of your readiness and level of commitment.

A) The confidence of the soldiers in the integrity of a NCO can only be obtained by his being rigidly just and impartial to those un-

der him, and by keeping his temper on all occasions, and discharging his duty without passion or feeling. A NCO who cannot control himself will find difficulty in controlling those men whom he is placed in charge of. He must also learn to dispense adequate praise for good performance of his men, and not rely solely on a loud voice and beratement to bring his charges within the parameters of their training.

**B)** The NCO will provide himself with a notebook and sharp pencil in which to enter the names of the men forming the details for which he is responsible. Orders and instructions given to him verbally should be reduced to writing at once, and not trusted to memory. He should endeavor to record the name of each soldier assigned to a particular duty, so as to avoid repetitious assignment of unsavory duties.

**C)** The use, or wearing of modern anachronisms either in apparel or in personal habits, (i.e. Eyewear, timepieces, footwear, or smoking) should be avoided within the company street, and while in formation, during the hours that the company or regimental colors are posted.

**D)** The “parroting” or repeating of orders given either by the battalion or company commander should be avoided except in such cases where the NCO is certain that those orders have not been heard by the men in his section. This practice is a “reenactorism” that began back in the 1960’s which may explain why so many feel that the practice is not only acceptable, but is military procedure. I can assure you it is not!

**E)** To be a NCO in the Infantry, 100% attendance at all company and battalion “maximum effort” events should be a pre-commitment before applying. Of course, “situations” do arise and are forgivable, but they should neither be frequent nor even consecutive. The officers and men rely on the NCO staff to be present in order to assure that all members of the company are able to enjoy themselves without being swamped by excess duties acquired through

absenteeism of a fellow NCO.

**F)** As a general rule, there are four major details assigned to the corporals at each event. One corporal will be assigned to each of the following for the entire event. Firewood, water, camp police, and authenticity. The corporal will be required to choose a set number of men to help him execute his assigned detail. He should complete the assignment as promptly and thoroughly as is possible each time it is necessary, and endeavor to teach himself when those necessary times might arise.

With these “general” guidelines out of the way, let’s concentrate on the duties specific to each rank.

### **CORPORAL**

**A)** The appointment of a corporal is the first step to promotion in the army, and may lead to the highest distinction in military service. The corporal is usually selected from the most intelligent privates who have been longest in the service, AND who are noted for their military appearance, attention to duty, ability to take command, and knowledge of drill.

**B)** The corporal should be able to teach the School of the Soldier, and have a good working knowledge of skirmish drill. The corporal is the closest NCO to the private in the ranks and his first and primary concern is to the welfare of the men in his care.

**C)** Corporals should be living examples of soldierly behavior to the men in their charge. This example will reflect in their attention to detail, being first on line at roll call and formation, and in the prompt execution of their assigned duties.

**D)** The corporal should be adept and familiar with **Hardee’s Rifle and Infantry Tactics, Vols. I and II.**, and should be able to correctly drill the men in his section at assigned times.

**E)** The corporal should stay in regular communication with the men in his charge, both on the field and off. Communication as to formation, drill, and meal times at an event will create greater co-

ordination, and lessen confusion. Communication between events will lessen guesswork pertaining to event attendance and hopefully persuade non committed members to attend more often.

**F)** Know the symptoms of heat and cold injuries. Check the men's health for special medical conditions. Ensure that the men are eating regularly, and drinking sufficient water to ward off possible weather related injuries. Also make sure that the men are sufficiently prepared to deal with cold weather problems.

**G)** Unsafe weapons conduct should be first noticed and corrected by the section corporal. Observation of firing and handling procedures by the men in his section should be undertaken, and corrections made when infractions are noticed. Repeated infractions should be reported to the 1st Sergeant immediately.

**H)** When a soldier neglects his duty towards a corporal, the corporal should at once report that neglect to the 1st Sergeant, whose duty it is to either decide the matter or report it to the commanding officer. Non-Commissioned Officers have it in their power at times to favor soldiers, that is, to relieve them of the most disagreeable parts of an assigned duty, and give it to others. Such distinctions soon destroy their influence over the men, and give rise to trouble and difficulty. They should seek to be fair and just, treat all alike, and when a hardship falls upon a particular soldier, he will have no reason to believe that he has been singled out.

**I)** As we portray a military unit, each corporal **MUST** camp in the company street. This will ensure that he is readily available to the men in his charge, and also to his superiors in the event that the company becomes unexpectedly involved in a change of schedule.

## **SERGEANT**

**A)** All sergeants should be able to teach the School of the Soldier and have a good working knowledge of skirmish drill. They should also be able to take over the duties of the 1st sergeant in the event

of his absence or incapacity.

**B)** The main difference between sergeants and corporals is in the number of men under his charge. In most instances a sergeant will probably be in charge of at least two sections or approximately 8 men including two corporals. On occasion he may be required to lead an entire platoon. The sergeant will usually serve as guide for the company while in march either in column or in line of battle. He must also learn and be able to readily execute the duties of battalion guide.

**C)** One of the most important duties of a sergeant is that of a file closer. His responsibilities include not only keeping the ranks and files dressed and in order, but will also be the **ONLY** person, NCO or private soldier, who will be allowed to draw a rammer on the field during battle. It is the sergeant's duty and responsibility to relieve the private soldier of a misfired weapon and remove it to the rear of the company for clearing during a battle scenario. The sergeants will also take it upon themselves to ensure that the corporals under their charge have executed their details accurately and thoroughly.

**D)** The second sergeant is regularly assigned the duties of ordinance control, though that duty may be assigned to a corporal at larger events. The second sergeant, or ordinance NCO, sees to the dispersement of all ordinance, and ensures that accurate records are kept concerning the dispersement. The second sergeant will also have charge of the rear rank while involved in skirmish drill.

**E)** The sergeant **MUST** camp in the company street in order to make himself readily available to the men in his charge.

### **FIRST SERGEANT**

**A)** The first sergeant **MUST** be able to understand thoroughly and be able to teach the School of the Soldier, skirmish drill, and School of the Company, and be able to command the company in the absence of an officer. He should also understand the School of

the Battalion. His first duty is to the welfare of the men in the company, and to ensure that all the NCO's are kept informed of the daily duties required of them.

**B)** The first sergeant is in charge of the company, and answers only to the company commander. In reality, it is his company more so than anyone else's. A good company commander will let the first sergeant run the company in its daily routine and details, but only if the first sergeant is capable of handling those responsibilities. If the first sergeant is not capable of performing those tasks, then he is not doing his job as the top soldier of the company.

**C)** The duties of the first sergeant are peculiar to his position, and require capacity and knowledge superior to those of the other sergeants. His position is one of the most responsible and most honorable that Non-Commissioned Officers can occupy. He has the immediate supervision of the company. He gets his orders directly from the company commander and sees that they are executed within the company. He assigns the details and sees to their prompt and efficient execution.

**D)** The first sergeant is in charge of training and drilling the company in the School of the Soldier and Company. He oversees and supervises the company drill, and ensures that the sergeants and corporals properly drill the men in their charge.

**E)** The first sergeant keeps the company roster, and is responsible for completing all the required company paperwork. At roll call, the first sergeant takes his place in front of the company at its center. He calls the roll starting with sergeants, corporals, and then privates by alphabetical order. After the roll has been called, he reports to the company officer the total number of muskets answering roll including himself. He will then announce duty assignments for the day, any other pertinent announcements, and then call the men to attention for posting of colors and address by the company commander. He will then salute his company commander and take his normal position on the right of the company, and act as right

guide. After the company commander dismisses the company from roll call formation, the first sergeant makes out the morning report, signs it, and then presents it to the company commander for his signature. When the report is accurate and complete with signatures, he will deliver the report to the battalion sergeant-major.

**F)** The first sergeant **MUST** camp in the company street, preferably as near the company commander's quarters as is possible, and he has supervision over all the company property. He sees that all other NCO's do their duty, and reports any neglect of assigned duties to the company commander.

**G)** He is usually empowered by the company commander to make decisions regarding the company and issue orders pertaining to such decisions. However, he will issue any orders to be "by order of the Captain" (or company commander). Any orders given to the company will be reported to the captain as soon as possible so that he may be aware of the situation, or correct if he does not approve of the first sergeant's actions.

## **REQUIRED READING**

### **Hardee's Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics Vols. I & II**

Anyone wishing to attain the rank of NCO should consider this a prerequisite to application.

## **RECOMMENDED READING**

### **Customs of Service by August V. Kautz**

This is the definitive work for the aspiring nco who wishes to someday replace his stripes with gold bars or stars on his collar!

In summary, these guidelines and rules will give you some insight as to what is required and expected of Non-Commissioned Officers within the ranks of the Infantry. Occasionally, there will be opportunities for interested privates to serve as brevet NCO's. It is from those opportunities that the private soldier may best decide if he is suited for the permanent responsibility. Any man willing to make these commitments will be considered for any permanent position that may arise. To be given the opportunity to serve in the brevet rank of corporal for any event, and be considered for permanent position, it is only necessary to inform either the first sergeant, or any commissioned officer in the company prior to the event. Good luck to all applicants!